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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**EC adopts enlargement strategy for Western Balkans (*dailies*)**

The European Commission has adopted yesterday in Strasbourg the European Union’s Enlargement Strategy for the Western Balkans. The strategy in Kosovo has been received with mixed reactions, with some praising the EC for confirming Kosovo’s European perspective while others criticizing it for not being more forward and concrete. ***Koha Ditore*** on the front page today writes that it is clear Kosovo’s mentioning in the strategy is not in equal terms with the rest of the Western Balkans region. It adds that apart from several references in the document to Kosovo’s “clear perspective”, the European Commission has failed to provide any clear answer to future steps Kosovo is to take in its journey to the EU. ***Zeri*** highlights the part of the strategy that makes mention of 2025 as the possible time for Serbia’s and Montenegro’s EU accession but that no integration timeline has been given for Kosovo.

Read more:

[http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\_IP-18-561\_en.htm](http://media.unmikonline.org/?email_id=2798&user_id=4&urlpassed=aHR0cDovL2V1cm9wYS5ldS9yYXBpZC9wcmVzcy1yZWxlYXNlX0lQLTE4LTU2MV9lbi5odG0&controller=stats&action=analyse&wysija-page=1&wysijap=subscriptions)

[https://ec.europa.eu/commission/publications/eu-western-balkans-strategy-credible-enlargement-perspective\_en](http://media.unmikonline.org/?email_id=2798&user_id=4&urlpassed=aHR0cHM6Ly9lYy5ldXJvcGEuZXUvY29tbWlzc2lvbi9wdWJsaWNhdGlvbnMvZXUtd2VzdGVybi1iYWxrYW5zLXN0cmF0ZWd5LWNyZWRpYmxlLWVubGFyZ2VtZW50LXBlcnNwZWN0aXZlX2Vu&controller=stats&action=analyse&wysija-page=1&wysijap=subscriptions)

**Mogherini: Dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade determines the future (*Zeri*)**

The EU High Representative Federica Mogherini at the presentation of the EU enlargement strategy stressed the importance of the dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade saying it was decisive for the future of both sides and their relations. “I am encouraged for the fact that the two presidents have launched a new stage of dialogue for normalisation of relations and I think it can be positively concluded if there is determination from the leadership and encouragement on our part during this mandate,” Mogherini said.

**Government finds EC strategy treats Kosovo “asymmetrically” (*media*)**

The government of Kosovo said in a press release following the publication of the European Union enlargement strategy that Kosovo is being treated “asymmetrically” and is given no clarity on its European future. “Republic of Kosovo has a number of achievements that would have to be acknowledged and recognised by the European Union as a serious commitment for crucial advancement in the European journey of our country,” the government said stressing its efforts in implementation of the European Reform Agenda. “The government of Kosovo expected this progress to be sufficient for clarifying the road Kosovo has ahead to gain candidate status, as was the case with all the other countries in the region, and the Enlargement Strategy to have been a, equal opportunity and roadmap for all, not just to list the criteria without mentioning achieved results,” the statement reads.

**Haradinaj: EU should lead clear policy toward Kosovo (*RTK*)**

The Prime Minister of Kosovo, Ramush Haradinaj, took to Facebook to write that there a range of achievements in Kosovo that should be recognized and accepted by the European Union. He considers that Kosovo has been treated in the EU Strategy for the six Western Balkans countries in an asymmetrical manner, without clarities on its European future, mentioning only conditions but not Kosovo’s station. “While we are aware of challenges in front of us, it is extremely important for the EU to have a clear policy toward Kosovo, in order to advance its integration process, and not risk our joint achievements for sustainable peace and stability in the region. These are also expectations of Kosovo citizens, who expect from the EU equal treatment for all European citizens,” Haradinaj wrote.

**Apostolova: There is no integration without normalization of relations (*Zeri*)**

Head of the EU Office in Kosovo, Nataliya Apostolova, said after the publication of the EU Strategy for Western Balkans, that there is no difference between Kosovo and the other countries included in the Strategy. “The strategy for Kosovo means that there is no difference between Kosovo and the countries of the region. The conditions are the same and EU’s commitment is the same. The pace of the process depends on partners. Bilateral contest should resolve as soon as possible. Kosovo and Serbia should intensify their relations as there is no European way for neither of them without this,” Apostolova said. Speaking about the duties of Kosovo, she gave a special importance to the Specialized Chambers saying ‘credibility can be lost easily, do not lose it.” Speaking about demarcation of the border with Montenegro, Apostolova said this is not a political matter and it should resolve as soon as possible.

**Veseli: For the first time EU treats Kosovo as a state (*dailies*)**

Kosovo Assembly President, Kadri Veseli, took to Facebook to write that it is good news that for the first time the EU member states, including here the ones that did not recognize Kosovo, accept and treat Kosovo as an independent and sovereign state. “We have deserved it, and we have waited for a long time, but our European perspective is unstoppable. Kosovo will continue its way of development and Euro-Atlantic integration, by fulfilling all its obligations,” Veseli wrote on his Facebook page and posted a picture from a meeting with the head of the EU Office in Kosovo, Nataliya Apostolova.

**Pacolli: Enlargement strategy, historic window for Kosovo (*Koha*)**

Kosovo’s Foreign Minister, Behgjet Pacolli, said the good news from Brussels is that the EU is overcoming the so-called enlargement fatigue and has turned its attention to the region. Pacolli said in a statement that a credible EU perspective for the Western Balkans represents an added commitment on the part of the EU and paves way for more stability. “The EU Enlargement Strategy opens a historic window for the Republic of Kosovo to connect determinedly and undoubtedly to a joint future in the European Union,” Pacolli said. However, he noted that Kosovo requests equal treatment with the rest of the region. “We considered the term ‘frontrunners’ to be unequal treatment. We have suggested offering a clear description over the candidate status for Kosovo as well as a clear timeline for opening of negotiations for EU accession. I strongly believe that Kosovo, alike other Western Balkans countries, can now benefit from a more advanced stability and prosperity which will enable a clear European perspective,” Pacolli said.

**Hoxhaj: Enlargement strategy important but gives no timeframe to Kosovo (*RTK*)**

Kosovo’s Deputy Prime Minister, Enver Hoxhaj, told RTK that the enlargement strategy adopted by the European Commission yesterday is an important document as it provides a serious opportunity for the Western Balkans integration into the EU but that in the case of Kosovo is has not given specific timeframe. “Our expectations were and are that this strategy is truly a roadmap on our path to membership by offering a timeframe and concrete stages of Kosovo’s advancement. We have continuously requested a balanced approach , which to a degree we managed to achieve,” Hoxhaj said.

**Hoxha: Strategy shows Kosovo’s path to EU is separate from Serbia (*media*)**

Kosovo’s Minister of European Integration, Dhurata Hoxha, hailed the European Commission’s enlargement strategy saying it shows the EU has open its door to Kosovo. “At this stage we expected to have the steps regarding the integration process for our country more concretely specified but nevertheless our journey to EU has no alternative,” Hoxha wrote on her Facebook profile. She added that it was very positive that the strategy confirmed Kosovo’s path to EU is separate from Serbia and that this, according to her, is a recognition of the statehood of Kosovo despite its non-recognition by certain member states. “It is also very positive that the EU categorically requests Kosovo and Serbia reach a legally-binding agreement as a precondition for EU membership,” Hoxha said.

**Soltes: EU doors have opened to new members (*Koha Ditore*)**

European Parliament’s rapporteur for Kosovo, Igor Soltes, said that the message conveyed by the European Commission’s enlargement strategy is that the European Union doors are open for new members. “The EU has sent a clear message that there can be no stable and peaceful European Union without the Western Balkans countries,” Soltes told Belgrade news agency ***FoNet***.

**MP Deda: Political shortsightedness and ignorance led to our isolation (*Koha*)**

Alternativa MP, Ilir Deda, said that the enlargement strategy presents a “bold” document which obliges aspiring countries to undertake crucial reforms to join the EU. As for Kosovo, Deda said that “political shortsightedness and ignorance” led to Kosovo’s isolation and “collective regression”. “In 2025 Kosovo could be close to EU membership or today’s status-quo, depending on the behaviour of Kosovo not the EU. And Kosovo’s actions will depend entirely on the decisions of each citizen of the Republic of Kosovo in next elections,” Deda wrote on Facebook.

**UN Security Council to discuss Kosovo today (*RTK*)**

The members of the UN Security Council will meet today to discuss the most recent report of the UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, on UNMIK’s work in Kosovo. The report covers the period of between October 2017 and January 2018.

**Meeting of Kosovo and Montenegro prime ministers, next week (*dailies*)**

The Prime Minister of Montenegro, Dusko Markovic, is expected to visit Kosovo next week. His visit planned for yesterday was annulled due to the fog at Pristina Airport. Both governments stated on Wednesday that the visit would happen very soon, without mentioning a date. Kosovo government spokesperson Donjeta Gashi, said their agendas will be coordinated once PM Haradinaj is back from the United States. During the visit, the Prime Ministers are expected to discuss the issue of Demarcation Agreement.

**Haradinaj: It would not be possible to abrogate the Special Court (*Zeri*)**

The Prime Minister of Kosovo, Ramush Haradinaj, told the German newspaper ***Basler Zeitung*** that the initiative for abrogation of the Special Court would fail anyhow, because this requires votes of the two thirds of the Assembly and constitutional changes, which is impossible. “Nothing will change, the initiative would not stop the Special Court anyhow,” Haradinaj said. Haradinaj said that the initiative was expression of democracy at the Assembly. And added that the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK), was against establishment of this court ever since 2014.

**Thaci, Haradinaj and Veseli violate state protocol (*Zeri*)**

The paper reports on its front page that the President of Kosovo, Hashim Thaci, Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj and Assembly President are not respecting the state protocol as all three of them will be outside Kosovo in the following days. President Thaci has traveled to the U.S. to participate at the Morning Prayer, Veseli has traveled for an official visit to Croatia, while Haradinaj is on his way to the United States. This is against the Law, notes the paper. The protocol requires coordination, in order for them not to be outside of the country at the same time.

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